

"The action (of galvanism), under these circumstances, on the heart was most striking, for it was found that the only place where the positive pole could contract the diaphragm *also inhibited the heart*.

If a current, by no means as strong as that frequently used in cases of suspended animation, produces such a profound effect upon the heart of a moderately anæsthetized dog, its effect upon a heart already overburdened by a congestion or depression would be disastrous.

It would seem probable that in those cases where the use of electricity has been resorted to, the return to life has been the result of reflex stimulations rather than a direct effect on the phrenic nerves. On the contrary, the striking effect upon the heart, shown by tracings, suggests the thought that improper application of electricity may in the past have been an important factor in determining a fatal issue."

"The observations of these gentlemen fully confirm those of Dr. Griswold, and are fully endorsed by us.

We regret exceedingly that Dr. Griswold's most excellent paper had not been known to these gentlemen in helping them to quick decision as to the dangerous effects of galvanism in cases of suspended animation.

THE PROPOSED NEW LUNACY LAW FOR NEW YORK STATE.

It will be remembered that, at the last meeting of the New York legislature, a lunacy bill was introduced which contained a number of sweeping reforms. The bill originated in a committee of the National Conference of Charities, and was engineered through the legislature by Mr. Gallup. It failed, however, to become law through the neglect of the Governor to affix his signature.

The same bill—with, we believe, no modification—is to be reintroduced at the coming session; and we desire, therefore, to call the attention of alienists in particular to some of the features which embody great improvements or impor-

tant changes. We may briefly summarize its most admirable characteristics as follows :

Removal to Asylum.—Attendants of the same sex must accompany patients to the asylum.

Voluntary Patients.—An insane person, cognizant of his condition, may at his own pleasure enter an asylum by written application, accompanied by a certificate from his family physician. He can leave by giving six days' notice to the asylum officials and two days to his family physician.

Emergency Cases.—Dangerous or exhausted patients may be received at the asylum for three days without procedure of any kind.

Confinement of Insane in Jails.—It is forbidden to detain a patient in jail beyond ten days, or to confine him in the same room with criminals.

Home Furloughs.—Visits home by asylum patients, of indefinite duration and at the discretion of the superintendent, are permitted.

Boarding-out of Chronic Insane.—This system, practised successfully in Scotland and of late in Massachusetts, is provided for in the new bill.

All of the features enumerated are important for the welfare of the insane, and our present laws are sadly derelict in respect to these matters.

For instance, to illustrate the faults of existing laws in the points just mentioned, we need but call attention to the fact that insane women are now, as a rule, taken to institutions by male deputed officers, who are not infrequently intoxicated; no patient can go voluntarily to an asylum without recourse to the usual two certificates, approved by a judge; it is illegal to admit a patient without the two medical certificates, even if such patient be moribund or in great danger of doing harm to himself or others; it is not uncommon to detain insane persons in jails, with criminals for company, for indefinite periods of time, in country districts; no home furloughs are at all permissible except by evasion of present laws; the boarding-out system is of course novel in America, and has not been provided for as yet in this State.

From all this it is easy to see how many exceptionally good qualities there are in the bill.

Its one great fault lies, however, in the method of commitment it presents. This is pernicious in the extreme. The manner of admission to asylums, as now practised, seems to offer obstacles enough to the early hospital treatment of these unfortunates; but the new bill quadruples these obstacles. The procedure proposed is so complicated, requiring no less than thirteen papers, and so surrounded with legal formalities, is so open to abuses of a political nature, that it should not be permitted to become law. As has been well said, an insane man is not a criminal, but an invalid requiring hospital care.

But our readers may draw their own conclusions as to the advisability of changing the existing process for one more difficult and confusing, by glancing over the steps in the method of commitment proposed, which may be summarized as follows:

1. A formal paper is made out by somebody (family physician?) notifying a public officer that a person is insane and requires asylum care.
2. This official directs two physicians (more than likely political friends of his), in a formal paper to each, to examine the patient.
3. The two physicians make out two documents certifying to the insanity.
4. If the public officer notified be a justice of the peace or superintendent of the poor, he too must visit the patient, to corroborate the diagnosis of the doctors and make out a formal paper as to his findings. He then presents his own and the doctors' papers to a judge of a court of record.
5. Such judge may then cause the patient to be brought into court, or visit him himself also, or try him by a jury. If he does neither of these, he makes out three more papers (one announcing to the sick man that he is a lunatic and about to be sent to an asylum; this must be served upon the invalid personally. The other two are an order committing him to some institution, and a warrant for his transfer to the asylum).

6. Then the asylum officer gives formal notice to the judge of the receipt of the patient, and the judge files this with the county clerk.

7. The judge causes copies of the medical certificates to be filed with the county clerk. He must also take proof as to the estate of the patient, and file a certificate upon the facts with the county clerk.

It would be far better to leave the law of commitment as it now is, and introduce the other features of the Gallup Lunacy Bill into our present system. The tendency should be not to the multiplication of formalities in committing the insane to hospitals, but to the simplification of methods, in order that the insane may be early treated for the disordered condition of their brains. It is to the future we must look for legislation which shall open all of our general hospitals to the insane, and which shall make ingress and egress easy to and from all of our insane institutions. In this way will the greatest good be accomplished, and no harm from wrongful detention ever result.